

DATELINE #109 NEW YORK
DAN NOBLE/BEN GRAUER

SEPTEMBER 8, 1976

THE 24 MANHATTAN MYTH

(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: NEW YORK: . . PICTURES IN SOUND, WORDS, AND MUSIC OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN AMERICA'S METROPOLIS. TODAY, AN EXPLORATION OF A MYTH. . . THAT DUTCH SETTLERS BOUGHT THE ISLAND OF MANHATTAN FROM THE AMERICAN INDIANS FOR THE EQUIVALENT OF TWENTY-FOUR DOLLARS. HERE'S ----- WITH THAT STORY.

VOICE: NEW YORK CITY IS OLDER THAN THE UNITED STATES. IN FACT, IT CELEBRATED ITS 350TH ANNIVERSARY A FEW MONTHS AGO. TODAY IT'S A MASS OF SKYSCRAPERS AND A GATHERING OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE. BUT THREE-AND-ONE-HALF CENTURIES AGO, MANHATTAN ISLAND, ON WHICH THE CORE OF NEW YORK CITY STANDS, WAS A LUSH, WOODED PLACE THAT ATTRACTED SETTLERS FROM HOLLAND. AND THE TRADITIONAL STORY IS THAT THE DUTCH BOUGHT THAT ISLAND FROM THE INDIANS WHO LIVED THERE FOR TWENTY-FOUR DOLLARS WORTH OF TRINKETS. COULD THAT REALLY HAVE HAPPENED? ALBERT BARAGANAWATH OF THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK HAS DONE SOME RESEARCH ON THIS TALE. HE SAYS:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- BARAGAWANATH

"THE ONLY PROOF WE HAVE THAT THERE WAS A PURCHASE, IS ONE LETTER FROM A MAN NAMED PETER SHAGAN. HE WAS IN HOLLAND AND HE WROTE TO ANOTHER MAN IN HOLLAND, AND THIS WAS IN NOVEMBER OF 1626, AND HE SAID, AMONG OTHER THINGS, IN THE LETTER, THAT THE ISLAND HAD BEEN PURCHASED FOR THE VALUE OF ABOUT 60 DUTCH GUILDERS. NOW, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE DUTCH DID NOT GIVE THE INDIANS MONEY, BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T DO ANYTHING WITH MONEY. THE ONLY PEOPLE THAT COULD USE MONEY WERE THE DUTCH THEMSELVES. AND, ALSO, I THINK IT VERY UNLIKELY THAT THE STAID DUTCH GAVE THEM TRINKETS OR BEADS.

TAPE: (CONT'D) THEY GAVE THEM WHAT THE INDIANS WERE TAKING IN TRADE FOR SKINS AT THAT TIME, WHAT YOU'D CALL TRADE GOODS: IRON POTS, A KNIFE, AN AXE, GOODS AMOUNTING TO 60 GUILDERS."

VOICE: THE MAN WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE CLOSED THE DEAL WAS PETER MINUIT, REPRESENTING THE DUTCH WEST INDIA COMPANY.

BUT WERE THE AMERICAN INDIANS REALLY SELLING THE ISLAND? NOT LIKELY, BECAUSE THE INDIANS OF THAT TIME HAD NO CONCEPT OF LAND OWNERSHIP THE WAY WHITE MEN THOUGHT OF IT. RATHER, THEY HAD A CONCEPT OF THE USE OF LAND, AS A TRUST FROM NATURE, FOR EVERYONE'S USE FOR HUNTING, FISHING AND GROWING FOOD.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- BARAGAWANATH

"THEY REALLY NEVER THOUGHT THEY WERE SELLING THE LAND. AND THEN LATER WHEN THE DUTCH, AND THE ENGLISH, IN 1670, STARTED MOVING UP CLOSE TO HARLEM AND NORTH ON MANHATTAN ISLAND, THE INDIANS WERE VERY RECALCITRANT ABOUT THIS ENCROACHMENT BY THESE WHITE PEOPLE ON THEIR LAND AND THEY STILL DIDN'T CONCEIVE OF HAVING EVER SOLD THE PROPERTY."

VOICE: THERE'S ANOTHER ASPECT TO THE STORY. SOME HISTORIANS THINK THAT THE INDIANS WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE DEALT WITH THE DUTCH DIDN'T EVEN LIVE ON MANHATTAN ISLAND. THAT THEORY SAYS THEY WERE FROM THE CANARSIE TRIBE WHO LIVED ACROSS THE RIVER FROM MANHATTAN IN WHAT IS NOW BROOKLYN.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- BARAGAWANATH

"THE CANARSIES OWNED -- I USE THE WORD INCORRECTLY -- USED TO FREQUENT A SMALL PART OF THE TIP OF MANHATTAN, AND THE MANHATTAN INDIANS, WHO OWNED THE REST OF THE ISLAND -- WELL THE DUTCH MAY HAVE MADE THE DEAL WITH THE CANARSIE INDIANS SAYING: 'SURE; WE'LL SELL THE WHOLE ISLAND TO THEM.'"

VOICE: EXPLODING A MYTH . . . ABOUT THE SALE OF MANHATTAN ISLAND
FOR THE EQUIVALENT OF TWENTY-FOUR DOLLARS BACK IN THE
17TH CENTURY.

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